1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

115 There were both "wild" and "village" Veddas even in the days of his youth, and the only difficulty experienced with the old man was in keeping the two classes perfectly distinct in his mind. The following facts were elicited in the course of three interviews, each lasting somewhat less than an hour. He stated that he was just able to walk when he came to the Eastern Province, and that as he grew up he spent much of his time with the Veddas hunting and collecting honey. The [156] Veddas of those days were a merry people, and with a most eloquent gesture the old man showed how they would throw dry leaves into the air and shout and dance for happiness; he said also that they were absolutely truthful. Every Vedda carried a bow and arrows and an axe; more arrows than one were 411 carried, but it was not clear that they only carried two; it seemed that *tudaḍi*, a word that the old man said was used to describe the number of arrows carried, may have meant a small quantity or may have been a hunting term corresponding to "brace" or "leash." The old man had seen Veddas shoot lying on their backs and holding the bow with their feet, but this was only for amusement and to show their skill, no serious shooting was done in this way. The feathers of peacocks, herons and hawks were especially used in feathering arrows; any of these birds would be shot with an ordinary arrow, and peacock was [262] eaten as was jungle fowl, though no one would eat porcupine or buffalo; for these abstinences he could give no reason. Traps 226 were not used. Fish were eaten, being caught by poisoning the 278 water of pools with the bark of *damba*, *mahapata*, *puselpata* (? *Entada scandens*) and the fruit of *timbiri* (*Diospyros embryopteris*) and *kukuruman* (*Adenanthera bicolor*). Pots and bark 415 cloth bags were made and betel pouches of monkey skin, though even then some village Veddas had cloth betel bags, and these occasionally reached the wilder Veddas. Among the village 304 Veddas both sexes bored their ears and the women wore ivory 301 studs in them; whether the women of the wilder groups bored 184 their ears and wore these ornaments was not clear, certainly 372 the men did not. Fire was obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling.

342 The wilder Veddas of those days built no houses but lived
437

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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entirely in caves; trading places called *wadia* near the caves, but out of sight of them, under a tree or rock, were used for bartering, where all strangers would stop and shout and then wait until their calls had been answered from the caves.

The Veddas were extremely jealous of their women, and intimate as our informant was with them as a young man, he was never taken to their caves while their women were there. The wilder Veddas could not count, at least they used no numerals beyond one, the method being to say "one" "and one" "and one," etc., probably putting a piece of stick on the ground or making a mark for each unit mentioned. Both hands with fingers extended were held up for ten, or perhaps for any number above six. The "silent trade" was only a tradition even among the wildest Veddas and had probably been extinct in this part of the country for at least two generations. The wilder Veddas had no areca nuts but chewed the bark of trees mixed with lime which they obtained by burning land shells which they called *wantako*.

Cousin marriage took place, the unions being arranged by the parents of the young people. Honey, dried venison and flesh of the monitor lizard were brought by the young man to the girl's father[1], who would call his daughter and give her in charge of her husband, for whom she would immediately make a waist string (*dia lanuwa*). She made no pretence of running away from her husband. Widows married an unmarried brother of their first husband if this were possible, in any case they might remarry and their sexual morality was as high as that of unmarried girls.

The wilder Veddas of the district belonged to the Morane and Unapane *waruge*; each clan had its own set of caves, though, since their members intermarried, there could have been no rigid exclusiveness about the arrangement. There were people of Uru *waruge* at a little distance; their status was lower than that of the Morane and Unapane folk, neither of whom would marry into this clan, and it was even said that the men of

[1] It was not clear whether more than one formal present of food was made; it must be remembered that a youth always gives part of any important kill to his potential father-in-law, cf. p. 67.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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cloth of the *riti* (*Antiaris innoxia*) of which material the Sinhalese still make rice bags. Men wear a rag of "white" cotton about 9 inches wide passed between their legs, and held in place by each end being passed over a waist string. This cotton material they prefer to anything else for two reasons, firstly, it very soon becomes a dull brown, and hence is less obvious when hunting than a coloured cloth would be, secondly, it is thin machine-made material from which they can easily tear narrow strips for tinder, when they make fire. The women wear coloured cotton cloth of the kind that is woven at Batticaloa, it is a strong material and is not easily torn. A single width forms the length of their skirt from waist to knee and is fastened round their waists like a sarong. Thus, the men's preference for "white" and the women's for coloured cloth is purely economical, depending on the kind of material it has been the pedlar's habit to bring. These pedlars visit the wilder Veddas once a year after the honey collecting season; they never approach the caves, but when within about a quarter of a mile of them they shout till a Vedda comes to them, then they expose their wares and the Vedda returns to the cave to fetch as many pots and gourds of honey and as much dried flesh as he is willing to exchange. The "silent trade," mentioned by Knox[1], is now a legend among the Sinhalese of which no tradition lingers among the Veddas. We have Bailey's evidence that it had ceased before 1863, and the old Kandyan we met (see p. 31) remembered it only as a tradition in the days of the rebellion in 1818. "They are not now, nor have they been for very long, so shy as to be prevented from bartering freely enough

[1] Cf. p. 6.

Fig. 3. Toy mallya × 1/7 (about).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

with the Sinhalese, although, unless for the purpose of barter, they avoid intercourse with strangers. Their wants, however, are so few, that they rarely emerge from their forests[1].

"I need not say that they are very simple and primitive in their habits. The 'wilder sort' have had too little communication with Sinhalese to have acquired the vices of civilization. The few necessities of life which the forest does not supply, such as steel and iron for their arrowheads and axes, and the very scanty clothing which they wear, they obtain by barter, their wax, and honey, elk flesh and ivory, being eagerly sought after by the neighbouring Sinhalese, or 'the ubiquitous Moors'[2]."

There are no puberty ceremonies for either sex, except among certain Veddas who have been much influenced by Tamils or Sinhalese, among whom the girls are isolated for a short time at puberty. Thus although the following ceremony is observed at puberty by the Uniche Veddas, there is no doubt that it has been borrowed from the local Sinhalese who have a similar ceremony, though according to our information the latter people do not break the pot. When a girl becomes unwell for the first time one of her *naena* places a pot of water on her head and goes with her to some place where there is a *nuga* tree. Here the *naena* takes the pot from the girl's head and dashes it on the ground so that the pot breaks. The girl is then secluded in a specially built shelter in which she stays until the end of the period, when she washes and returns to her parents' house. During her seclusion she is attended by a girl, always one of her *naena*, who brings her food in a vessel set apart for this purpose but which is not cooked at a special fire. Among the wilder Veddas no special measures are taken when a woman menstruates, she is allowed to eat the ordinary food, and to sleep in the cave as usual. But among all the village Veddas, and most of those who have mixed at all with the Sinhalese, the menstruous women are strictly isolated, a little shelter being built for them a few paces from the family hut (Plate XX). At Bendiyagalge, where the Henebedda and Kolombedda people were staying at the time of our visit, menstruous women stayed apart at one corner of the cave, they were fed from the pot in

[1] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 285—286. [2] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 291.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-6 (1907-1908) 1911
AES Vedda AES

The Dola Yaka Ceremony.

222 437 Collecting honey is almost as important to the Vedda as hunting, for not only is honey valuable as food but it is one of the most important articles of barter, and every year at the end of the honey season the Moorman pedlar[1] penetrates into the wildest parts of the jungle with iron, cloth, pots and beads to exchange for the highly prized jungle honey.

222 796 796 Nor is honey collecting without risk, for the "Little People of the Rocks" can be very angry, and their sting is deadly. Hence the Veddas ask for success in honey collecting from their natural protectors the *yaku*, and Dola Yaka is especially invoked for this purpose. Although there is no tradition concerning his actions or his dwelling place his aid is invoked for success in collecting *bambara* honey from trees, and for the more dangerous task of cutting the combs from the craggy hill tops and rock faces in which the colonies of the rock bee make their homes. The successful invocation of Dola Yaka can only take place in the early afternoon at the time when the bees are most active in visiting flowers.

796 798 A *maesa* with a single platform about 4 ft 6 in. from the ground was built, and two arrows were fixed in the centre of the space cleared for the dance (Plate XLVII). A betel leaf was placed on the top of each and pressed down on the shaft so that it rested on the feathers, and a small bead necklace was looped over the head of each arrow and rested on the betel leaf. These leaves were said to represent the large bundles of leaves which the Veddas use to smoke the bees from the comb, and the necklaces represent the creeper by which the twigs would be tied together and by which it would be lowered over the cliff edge. It was noted that one arrow was taller than the other, and we were told that the taller arrow was the one which would be used in cutting the comb, and that when the honey was taken it would be thrust through the withy binding the bundle of leaves used

[1] The term Moormen is applied to the numerous Mohammedans who make their living as shopkeepers and pedlars. Many of them are proud of their alleged Arabic descent, but it is only in a minority that skin colour or features suggest Arab blood, and the appearance of the majority of Moormen scarcely differs from that of the Tamils of the East Coast, among whom their most considerable settlements are found.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

323 In both communities it was said that men and women make pots, and of five pots bought at Bendiyagalge at different times three were said to have been made by men and two by women. Further, it was agreed that pots had been made for a very long time and our informants at Sitala Wanniya said that they were made in their grandfather's grandfather's time, the longest period we ever heard a Vedda mention. A small pot, the upper right-hand pot of Plate LXII, made by Poromala of Bingoda, has a [531 177] rough chevron pattern upon it; no importance or meaning was attached to this, which was avowedly copied from a pot obtained by barter. The thick open pot without a lip shown in the lower right-hand corner was made by Poromala (Walaha) who volunteered the information that the oldest pots were lipless. The large pot in the centre of the upper row was made by his wife. The pot to the left of this was made by Poromala (Walaha) and the pot underneath this by Randu Wanniya. It is worthy of note that though many fragments of wheel-made [172] pottery were found in the upper layers of the floor of the Bendiyagalge caves, no trace of pottery was found in the deepest layer associated with the quartz implements figured in Chapter I.

Tools and Weapons.

411 The bow and arrow with the axe are the only iron tools used by the Veddas for the chase, for fighting, and for general [437] domestic use. The iron arrow and axe heads are obtained by barter, as are the areca nut-cutters and strike-a-lights which most Veddas now possess. To a limited extent the areca nut-cutters are used as tools, for we have seen the final polishing and trimming of arrow shafts performed with these.

411 No spells are recited or other magic used when making axes 322 or bows and arrows. At Henebedda the wood of the *kobbevel* (*Allophylus cobbe*) is used for the bow; a sapling is peeled and shaved down until the desired amount of flexibility is obtained, it is then stained black. The bow string is made of the bast of [283 314] a tree called *aralu* (*Terminalia chebula*), the same is used to bind that part of the shaft of the arrow pierced by the tang of the arrow head, the binding being afterwards covered with gum or resin obtained from the timbiri tree (Diospyros embryopteris).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

from trees. Besides the *bambara* other species including the small stingless bee supply a considerable quantity. The first two months of our sojourn in the Vedda country (January and February) was at a time when honey was particularly scarce, and even at the end of March and in April it was not abundant, yet such was the courtesy of the Veddas that each community managed to make us a small present of honey, though this often entailed a long search and the combs were frequently full of grubs. In two communities only, which were better off than the others, namely Danigala and Kulukalaeba, were we given large pots of strained honey, the remains of the previous year's store.

The manner in which *bambara* colonies are regarded as property has been discussed in Chapter v. Writing in 1886 Nevill says, "Honey forms a great part of their diet. It is eaten fresh in large quantities, wax and all; combs with young bees in them being considered especially wholesome. It was also the practice formerly to store strips of dried meat in honey, filling in a cavity of some tree with it, the cavity being first lined with clay. At present they barter away their surplus meat and honey, during the hunting season, and keep no store for the rainy season. This often brings privation and is one cause of the rapid decrease in their numbers.

"They tell me their health is never so good as when their food largely consists of yams and honey.

"To procure honey they rapidly cut open hollow trees, even of the hardest wood; and to take the hives of the large black bambara bee, they make long ladders of cane, called 'rang kendiya,' by which they descend precipices, and cut off the combs adhering to their sides.

"They do this at night, generally, as the bees are not so savage then; and smoke them with a sort of resin. The hives are often cut off with a sort of wooden sword, made for the occasion. These frail ladders swing fearfully, and the task is so dangerous, only the boldest and most athletic attempt it. While engaged on the task they sing lustily, songs specially made, which appease the spirit of the rock, and prevent him from dashing the hunter off the ladder. They also go about

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

A Vedda woman, who had preserved bunches of the fruit in a pot of honey, was able to provide them; and so earned the name of her tribe. The Uniapana *waruge*, like all the other *waruges*, also owed its name to a woman. She, when a king was out hunting in a parched land, supplied him with drink by squeezing out her dew-drenched cloth! Thirst apparently destroys the fastidiousness even of kings. The Rugam *waruge* derives from an incident connected with the building of the bund of Rugam tank. After its completion, this earth-work used to break down with the yearly floods despite all efforts at consolidating it. The Sinhalese king of the time had a vision one night telling him, that if a pregnant woman were built alive into the bund, it would ever after remain intact. A Vedda woman was sacrificed, and her clan received the name of the tank. The Uru *waruge* was called after a child-birth in a pig's hole; the Tala *waruge* after such an episode in a *talawa* or glade; the Nabudena, Kiribo and Embille *waruges* after similar occurrences under *nabudu*, *kiribo* and *embille* trees respectively. The Veddas being nomadic these incidents are common. Gama, as we have seen, owed his name to being born on the way (*gamana*).

Though shy and retiring by nature, Veddas are always to be found in the vicinity of Sinhalese settlements; and that, for good reasons: Ceylon being but a small island, its remotest forests are easily accessible; more so in recent years when roads and railways have spread out their tentacles everywhere claiming from Nature her wildest solitudes. Any jungles that have not yet fallen a prey to planting enterprise owe it largely to their aridity and unhealthiness. Nowhere is there a spot in Ceylon to-day that is not within ten miles of some habitation. Besides, it is to the mutual advantage of both Vedda and Sinhalese to be near each other, for if the one can supply grain in days of dearth, the other can repay tenfold with flesh and honey in season.

The Sinhalese affect an indulgent tolerance towards the Veddas, and aver them to be more of a nuisance than a help, saying the Veddas have to be kept alive when starving. The Vedda, on the other hand, will tell you that he is never in want; for the jungle, even in its worst months, is never totally devoid of food for him who knows where to find it: *kanava* and *kotha* combs are always there, and meat and yams of one sort or another. It must however be admitted, that the Veddas have a great partiality for what the unaided jungle cannot give—*kurrukhan*, maize, and tobacco. Rice is a welcome occasional meal to the Vedda, but he cannot do without *kurrukhan*; it takes much rice to fill the stomach, whereas a *kurrukhan* cake is like a stone, and even a small piece satisfies.

A Sinhalese told us that if you gave a Vedda much by way of barter, he would never come near you again, but would go where the giving was more niggardly. (What a salve to the conscience!) We asked a Vedda if this was true: "Much they give us," he said; "though they are always ready enough to take all we give them—and more."

In the bottom of their hearts the Veddas have a suspicion that the Sinhalese wish them no good. A Vedda, when asked how it was that their numbers had dwindled so, said, with simple faith, that it was due to the Sinhalese having killed out his people, by giving them charmed tobacco to eat, so that they died of disease or misadventure. The recent influenza epidemic fairly wiped out the last of the Veddas.